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Remarks
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In June 1984, I had an all day Surgeon General's Workshop on Breastfeeding and Human Lactation at the University of Rochester School of Medicine. The consensus among health professionals was that breastfeeding was by far the most beneficial way to feed newborns and infants. The workshop participants recommended many actions to help women breastfeed.

Breastfeeding comes in cycles, in any public health community, and my time as Surgeon General was no exception. I included it in this archive, just so the user will understand that breastfeeding is a serious public health problem, and we never can stop talking about it anymore than we can stop talking about smoking.

The purpose of the Press Conference was to announce public attitudes about breastfeeding only two years after the workshop mentioned above was held. The results were wonderfully reassuring, suggesting that we were either unduly pessimistic two years ago or that we had worked wonders in a very short time.

Three-quarters of Americans recognize breastfeeding as the best way to feed a baby, two-thirds of the people think a working woman can continue to breastfeed, and a majority think that a woman's employer should provide facilities for her to do so.

One of the best things that came out of this study was that the working women can be confident now that more of her co-workers will support her decision to continue breastfeeding and that armed with that knowledge, employers should be encouraged to make certain that the work place has facilities for a nursing mother.

I was impressed that there was strong support for breastfeeding across different age and ethnic groups, income and educational levels, geographic and demographic categories and gender. In fact on most questions, men more than women supported breastfeeding. Unfortunately, younger and less educated persons tend not to support breastfeeding, indicating that this should be the group to which we need to send a strong and consistent message.

In 1990, almost a decade before this press conference was held, the Public Health Service set the following target for 1990: at least 75 per cent of all women leaving the hospital with newborn babies would choose to breastfeed and that at least 35 per cent of all mothers who did so choose would still be breastfeeding at 6 months of age. This survey indicates that our society will reach these national objectives. In closing, I called upon on health professionals to join me in encouraging every new mother to choose breastfeed if she can. After all, it's the best thing she can do for her child.